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RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1979  
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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 006574

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/03/2016

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SUBJECT: TURKISH PM ERDOGAN'S VISIT TO TEHRAN -- INITIAL  
READOUT

Classified By: AMBASSADOR ROSS WILSON FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

[11.](#) (S) Summary: Turkish PM Erdogan emphasized Lebanon and the implications for Iran of widening Shia/Sunni conflict during his December 3 visit to Tehran, according to FM Gul and PM/FM foreign affairs advisor Davutoglu. Other topics included Iraq and Iranian gas transit for the Nabucco pipeline. End Summary.

FM Gul

[12.](#) (S) During a meeting on Turkey's EU negotiations December 4, FM Gul described to Ambassador the approach that PM Erdogan took during his visit to Tehran the previous day and how Turkey is looking at the Middle East. He noted that Erdogan mentioned his travel plans in Riga to the President and said that the trip was an outgrowth of the Oval Office conversation about Iran and the Middle East that the two leaders had in early October.

[13.](#) (S) According to Gul, Erdogan made the following points in Tehran:

-- Lebanon: Instability and discord in Lebanon feed Shia-Sunni conflict throughout the Middle East. That is a danger to Iran and therefore not in Iran's interests. On the contrary, stability there is good for all the states in the region. Iran should stop encouraging Hezbollah, and it should use its influence in Damascus toward the same end. Turkey wants the Siniora government to succeed.

-- Iraq: Here, too, the specter of Shia-Sunni conflict can endanger Iran and Iranian interests. Iran should stop and discourage those feeding sectarian and religious conflict; it should give stronger support to the government in Baghdad. This will lead to improved cooperation throughout the region. Iran should also make use of the Neighbors of Iraq meetings. (Gul noted, parenthetically, that no Neighbors' foreign ministers meeting is now scheduled, which he regretted.)

-- Nuclear: Iran should be logical and not miss an opportunity with the US and the West. It may feel strong now, but will find itself weak and fragile if conflict comes. Instead, Iran should accept a diplomatic solution and work with the P5 plus 1 proposal put forward in June.

[14.](#) (S) Gul said that Tehran also proposed an MOU on the

transit of Iranian gas across Turkey and into the Nabucco gas pipeline that is being developed to supply Austrian and other European markets. Gul said this MOU was prepared pursuant to a secret Austrian/Iranian gas agreement that was done behind Turkey's back. He said there was no action on this MOU and implied that none will be taken any time soon.

15. (S) Ambassador briefly described to Gul work during the past two weeks in Baghdad to bolster moderate, cross-sectarian support for the Maliki government. He noted that NEA PDAS Jeffrey will be in Ankara December 13-15 and looks forward to talks with Gul and others about Iraq, Iran and the Middle East. Gul expressed appreciation for US consultations with Turkey on regional issues. In his view, the key Iraqi problem is that no consensus exists among the leadership on the future shape of Iraq. In the absence of agreement, various leaders at least tacitly are endorsing violence, whatever they may say to us, as a way to shape the future and guarantee their interests. US and other external efforts need to focus on getting consensus, especially regarding the distribution of oil wealth. Gul also remarked that the constitution will require changes if it is accurately to reflect consensus among the main Iraqi groups.

PM/FM Foreign Affairs Advisor Davutoglu  
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16. (S) During a December 4 meeting on Turkey/EU issues, the German ambassador here briefed Ambassador on a readout of Erdogan's Tehran talks that he got earlier in the day from Davutoglu. Erdogan reportedly met with spiritual leader Khamenei, Ahmedinejad, Rafsanjani and Larijani. Talks with each Iranian interlocutor were similar. The majority of the discussion focused on Shia/Sunni tensions in the region as a

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whole and in Lebanon and Iraq. On Iraq, both sides agreed on the importance of territorial integrity and defusing Shia/Sunni tensions and violence. Erdogan urged that Tehran use its influence to aim Shia in Iraq and throughout the region in favor of stability. Iran reportedly agreed with Turkey on the need to strengthen the Maliki government and regarding Kirkuk. On Lebanon, Erdogan said that Hezbollah's withdrawal from the government was a mistake and urged cooperation among regional states to support PM Siniora. The Iranians agreed to try to use their influence to promote peaceful developments in Lebanon, but said Hezbollah expects a better position in the Beirut government and/or other political concessions.

17. (S) On the nuclear issue, according to Davutoglu's readout to the German, the Iranians complained about the US, saying there is nothing they can do that will satisfy us. They claimed only to want to develop a peaceful nuclear energy program and rejected the idea of wanting nuclear weapons, which are contrary to Islam. Erdogan reportedly took the line indicated by FM Gul above, stressing in particular the P5 plus 1 proposal.

18. (S) In a separate meeting with Ambassador December 2 before Erdogan's trip, Davutoglu noted several Erdogan conversations with PM Siniora, the last of which occurred earlier that day. Siniora, who did not seem in a "panic," sought Turkish support in Tehran and Damascus. Davutoglu said Erdogan would emphasize in Tehran and Damascus that Hezbollah needs to be encouraged along the political track and discouraged from the military/terrorist track. In Tehran, he would note the dangers for Iran of Shia/Sunni confrontation, especially given that Iran is largely surrounded by Sunni populations that will only be emboldened by Shia gains and militancy in Iraq, Lebanon, etc. Iran can live in a safer world or a more dangerous world, but the choice depends on its actions. Erdogan would also refer in Tehran to his October conversation in Washington with President Bush and reiterate what he thought he heard from the President: that the June P5 plus 1 proposal is serious

and has full US support, and that the US is also serious in its determination that Iran should not have a nuclear weapons capability.

¶9. (S) Regarding Iraq, Davutoglu said that a key problem is the lack of a Sunni counterbalance to the Shia and Kurds. Getting consensus among the three communities is essential to maintaining Iraq's territorial integrity and unity. Davutoglu said that if these fail, then "one goes back to the 1920s" -- e.g., when the new Republic of Turkey and the UK jostled for control of the former Ottoman province of Mosul, today's northern Iraq. Seemingly realizing the gravity of his reference, Davutoglu hastened to add that Turkey does not want and will not seek a redrawing of any boundaries.

#### Next Steps

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¶10. (S) Gul said that Erdogan still plans to visit Damascus and Beirut. The sequence and timing are unclear, but the visits should occur before the end of the year and probably much sooner. Davutoglu told the German ambassador that Damascus will come first, and both cities should be soon. We note that Erdogan is scheduled to be in Romania December 6-7 and New York from about December 18 for an Alliance of Civilizations event.

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